Development and Validation of the Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale

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ABSTRACT. This research details the development of a new instrument designed to measure attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Participants were 615 heterosexual women and men, drawn from both student and nonstudent adult populations. Four studies were conducted for the purpose of developing the scale and to establish its psychometric properties. The resulting Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale (ATSM) consists of 17 items, has a one-dimensional factor structure, and exhibits a high degree of reliability. Additional analyses established the construct validity of the ATSM where ATSM scores were highly correlated with scores on the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (Herek, 1988). ATSM scores followed predicted correlational patterns with select demographics, including educational attainment, religiosity, and political conservatism. The usefulness of this new measure in survey research is discussed. doi:10.1300/J082v53n03_07 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2007 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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KEYWORDS. Attitudes, same-sex marriage, gay marriage, sexual orientation, lesbians, gay men, scale development

INTRODUCTION

The present research describes the psychometric properties of a new scale assessing attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Although there are currently no published scales of this nature, several measures have been developed to assess heterosexual attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Research on attitudes toward lesbians and gay men provides an initial theoretical framework for considering attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) legislative issues, including same-sex marriage.

Attitudes Toward Gays and Lesbians

Researchers have developed and used several scales to measure heterosexual attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (Herek, 1988; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Kite, 1991; MacDonald, Huggins, Young, & Swanson, 1972; Morrison, Parriag, & Morrison, 1999). Generally, these assessments follow a similar format, allowing for simple comparisons between scales. Attitude measures have typically used Likert-type scales to gauge respondents’ agreement or disagreement either with basic statements regarding lesbians and gay men, or about the nature of homosexuality.

Collectively, research using these scales indicates that sex is, perhaps, the greatest predictor of heterosexual attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Heterosexual males exhibit stronger negative attitudes than do their female counterparts (D’Augelli & Rose, 1990; Herek, 2002; Herek & Capitanio, 1999; Kite, 1984; LaMar & Kite, 1998). In addition, both heterosexual women and men hold stronger negative attitudes toward gay men than toward lesbians (Herek, 1988, 2000, 2002).

Beyond sex, other demographic factors influence attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Positive attitudes are most likely to be reported in younger participants and individuals with post-secondary education (Herek, 1984; Herek & Capitanio, 1995; Lewis, 2003; Simoni, 1996). In addition, individuals who report being strongly religious and subscribe to a conservative religious ideology have been shown to hold more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men in general (Herek,

Additional research has uncovered factors related to a change of attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Specialized education and training has been shown to decrease negative attitudes among undergraduate students, specifically through human sexuality education that includes information about homosexuality (Serdahely & Ziemba, 1984; Finken, 2002), and courses that address the issue of sexual orientation (Waterman, Reid, Garfield, & Hoy, 2001). Likewise, graduate student training in counseling psychology has resulted in a decrease in negative attitudes (Phillips & Fischer, 1998).

Interpersonal contact with lesbians and gay men has also been shown to decrease homophobia among heterosexuals, and is a powerful predictor of heterosexual attitudes (Anderssen, 2002; Basow & Johnson, 2000; Cullen, Wright, & Alessandri, 2002; Herek, 1994; Horvath & Ryan, 2003; Ingrid & Ponterotto, 1988; Simoni, 1996). More specifically, Herek and Capitanio (1996) found that multiple contact experiences were accompanied by increased acceptance. Even individuals who commonly hold negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men—such as highly religious individuals—report decreased levels of homophobia with contact experience (Herek & Glunt, 1993).

With the changing landscape of LGBT visibility, research has documented a corresponding shift toward more positive attitudes regarding lesbians and gay men, as measured by heterosexual undergraduate mean scores on Herek’s (1998) *Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale*. Scores on this scale have recently moved closer to below the mid-point, thereby denoting somewhat more positive or neutral attitudes (Schellenberg, Hirt, & Sears, 1999; Simon, 1995; Simoni, 1996; Waldo & Kemp, 1997). However, as lesbians and gay men have become more open with their sexuality, issues surrounding attitude formation toward this group have become more complex. For example, Morrison and Morrison (2002) suggest that earlier scales may be measuring a more traditional view of homosexuality—a type of homonegativity no longer endorsed by the majority of undergraduate students. This movement away from traditional viewpoints does not necessarily indicate a positive shift in attitudes. In fact, modern notions may also be negative in nature. A recent measure, the *Modern Homonegativity Scale* (Morrison & Morrison, 2002) was designed to reflect the more subtle attitudes currently surrounding homosexuality and individuals who identify as lesbian and gay. This more contemporary measure may also prove useful.
Attitudes Toward Civil Rights Legislation for Lesbians and Gay Men

The putative shift in attitude toward lesbians and gay men in recent years has been accompanied by changes in anti-discrimination legislation on the basis of sexual orientation. Although initially the connection between the two may seem direct, it is actually a complex one. Despite increased willingness to support the civil liberties of lesbians and gay men, many Americans continue to have moral and personal objections to lesbians and gay men in general (Herek, 1991). Anti-discrimination laws that include sexual orientation seem to have been introduced as a logical extension of the civil rights movement and not necessarily because of increased acceptance of lesbians and gay men (Wald, Button, & Rienzo, 1996).

Attitudes toward lesbians and gay men and toward anti-discrimination legislation, however, are mediated by some of the same demographic variables. For example, research has found that an individual’s attitude toward the civil rights of lesbians and gay men is mediated by important demographic factors, such as educational attainment (Gibson & Tedin, 1988) and religiosity (Herek, 1987; Lewis & Rogers, 1999; Schroedel, 1999; Tyagart, 2002), in a direction that mirrors their influence on attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. This parallel is not necessarily surprising. Close inspection of measures for attitudes toward lesbians and gay men reveals that some scales include questions regarding lesbian and gay rights, and that these questions displayed high reliability with the overall scale totals. For example, Herek’s scale (1988) includes the following questions: “State laws against private sexual behavior between consenting adult women should be abolished,” “The idea of male homosexual marriages seems ridiculous to me,” and “Male homosexual couples should be allowed to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples.” The Homonegativity Scale (Morrison, Parraig, & Morrison, 1999) includes the question “Homosexuals should have all the same rights as heterosexuals.” And Morrison and Morrison’s (2002) more recent Modern Homonegativity Scale includes such statements as “Gay men (or Lesbians) have become far too confrontational in their demand for equal rights,” and “Gay men (or Lesbians) do not have all the rights that they need,” among others.
Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage

Although same-sex marriage advocates frame the issue as one of civil rights for lesbians and gay men, attitudes toward same-sex marriage may not follow the same pattern as, for example, attitudes toward anti-discrimination legislation. Attitudes toward marriage are uniquely related to religious beliefs. Historically, religious institutions have defined romantic and sexual relationships (Herman, 1997; Warner, 1999). Same-sex marriage policies, therefore, are potentially more likely to invoke a morality-based response from religiously affiliated individuals than are anti-discrimination laws involving sexual orientation (Barclay & Fisher, 2003; Wald, Button, & Rienzo, 1996). To date, no scale exists that assesses attitudes toward same-sex marriage or the complexity of issues that are likely to have an impact on attitudes toward this issue. With the visibility of the same-sex marriage debate increasing dramatically, it is evident that there is a clear gap in the literature.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to develop a psychometrically sound research instrument relevant to current attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Collectively, four studies were conducted to investigate the psychometric properties of the Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale. The purpose of the research was threefold: (1) to develop a reliable measure of attitudes toward same-sex marriage; (2) to establish the factor structure of the scale; and (3) to establish the construct validity of the scale.

It was hypothesized that positive attitudes toward same-sex marriage would correlate with positive attitudes toward lesbians and gay men, and that women would report more positive attitudes than men for both scales. In addition, it was predicted that positive attitudes toward same-sex marriage would be related to higher levels of educational attainment, lower levels of religiosity, and lower levels of political conservatism.

METHODS

General Participants and Procedure

Participants in all three studies were self-identified heterosexual women and men. All participants completed the Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale and Herek’s (1988) Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay
Men Scale, as well as a basic demographic questionnaire. Participants individually completed the study in an online, anonymous format through a secure server. Participation required approximately 10-15 minutes. Upon completing the study, participants were free to ask any questions generated by the research process by emailing the primary researcher. All participants were treated in accordance with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2002).

**Materials**

*Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale (ATSM).* The ATSM measured participants’ individual attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Developed specifically for this study, the scale measured general attitudes toward same-sex marriage. The survey originally comprised 22 items that addressed 11 separate dimensions of the same-sex marriage debate. Each dimension represented a unique issue expressed in the current literature and/or media: Belief in marriage as a societal institution, strengthens family, undermines gender roles, calls into question the purpose of marriage, normalization of homosexuality, ensures individual civil rights, financial effects, ensures religious freedom, relation to religious belief, relation to morals, and statement of belief in same-sex marriage. Two counterbalanced questions were included for each dimension, one representing a supportive attitude, and the second a nonsupportive attitude toward same-sex marriage. Participants chose a number on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to denote their level of agreement with each of the 22 statements. Possible scores ranged from 22 (highly negative attitudes) to 110 (highly positive attitudes).

Based on the findings of the first study, five items were removed from the original survey resulting in a 17-item revised version of the ATSM. This version was used for all subsequent studies and incorporated a scoring structure parallel to the original survey, as described above. Possible scores ranged from 17 (Highly negative attitudes) to 85 (Highly positive attitudes).

*Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale–Short Form (ATLG-S).* Herek’s (1988) ATLG-S scale is the most commonly used measure for attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. A test of reliability for this scale yielded an alpha greater than .85 for college students (Herek, 1984, 1988). Participants chose a number on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree) to denote their agreement with
each of 10 statements about lesbians and gay men. Possible scores ranged from 10 (Highly positive attitudes) to 50 (Highly negative attitudes).

**STUDY 1**

**Purpose**

The purpose of Study 1 was to examine the psychometric properties of a preliminary 22-item version of the ATSM scale and to make revisions to the scale, as necessary. Factor structure and reliability were considered.

**Participants**

The sample consisted of 154 undergraduate students enrolled at Towson University. The analysis did not include surveys completed by participants who identified themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning ($n=6$). Therefore, the data analysis included surveys from 148 heterosexual participants (100 women and 48 men) recruited from the online Psychology Research Pool for Towson University. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 51 years, with a mean age of 19.28 years ($SD = 3.86$). Participants identified themselves as African American/Black (8.8%, $n=13$), Asian American (7.4%, $n=11$), White/Non-Hispanic (81.8%, $n=121$), Hispanic/Latino/a (0.7%, $n=1$), Native American (0.7%, $n=1$), or Not Identified (0.7%, $n=1$). When requested, students received extra credit in various courses for their participation.

**Results**

A Principal Components Analysis with oblimin rotation reduced the 22 items into three factors, which accounted for 63.3% of the variance in the data. The first factor alone accounted for 50.9% of the variance (eigenvalue = 11.18) followed by factor two with 6.8% (eigenvalue = 1.48) and factor three with 5.6% (eigenvalue = 1.24). The majority of the items ($n=17$) loaded on the first factor, which conceptually represented attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Items loading primarily on the second factor were dropped, as it was not clear what these items were measuring. The three items that loaded primarily on the third factor appeared to conceptually represent participants’ overall belief in the institution of marriage. These items were therefore dropped from the
ATSM scale because belief in the institution of marriage is distinct from attitudes toward same-sex marriage.

The remaining items loaded above .58 on the first factor and were used to form the 17-item *Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale* (see Appendix). The revised 17-item ATSM scale yielded an acceptably high level of internal consistency, where $\alpha = .96$ ($N = 148$).

**STUDY 2**

*Purpose*

The purpose of Study 2 was to establish the psychometric properties of the newly revised 17-item ATSM scale. In addition, a broader undergraduate sample was obtained to investigate the usefulness of the scale. Factor structure and reliability were considered.

*Participants*

The sample consisted of 255 undergraduate students from various colleges and universities. The analysis did not include surveys completed by participants who identified themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning ($n = 30$). Therefore, the data analysis included surveys from 225 heterosexual participants (173 women and 52 men) recruited from postings on two Web pages devoted to listing links for online Psychological Studies. Participants represented 30 different 2 and 4 year institutions and resided in 23 states across the U.S. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 50 years, with a mean age of 20.90 years ($SD = 4.45$). Participants identified themselves as African American/Black (8%, $n = 18$), Asian American (2.7%, $n = 6$), White/Non-Hispanic (82.2%, $n = 185$), Hispanic/Latino/a (3.1%, $n = 7$), Multiracial (3.6%, $n = 8$), or Not Identified (0.4%, $n = 1$). When requested, students received extra credit in various courses for their participation.

*Results*

Results for Study 2 provided a successful replication of Study 1 with a broader undergraduate participant demographic. The Principal Components Analysis with oblimin rotation revealed one factor, where all 17 items loaded on the factor above .63 and accounted for 60.0% of the
variance in the data. In this sample, the ATSM yielded a high level of internal consistency, where $\alpha = .96 \ (N = 225)$.

**STUDY 3**

**Purpose**

The purpose of Study 3 was to replicate the findings regarding the psychometric properties of the 17-item ATSM scale with an adult, non-student population. Factor structure and reliability were considered. As this sample included a range of educational experiences, a correlation coefficient was calculated for level of educational attainment and ATSM scores. Education was assessed on a single-item, for which participants indicated highest level of education completed.

**Participants**

The sample consisted of 332 adults from the general population. The analysis did not include surveys completed by participants who identified themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning ($n = 90$). Therefore, the data analysis included surveys from 242 heterosexual participants (186 women and 56 men). Participants were recruited from several general list-serves. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 87 years, with a mean age of 35.88 years ($SD = 12.55$). Participants represented all regions of the U.S. including 34 states and Washington, DC. Participants identified themselves as African American/Black (4.1%, $n = 10$), Asian American (1.7%, $n = 4$), White/Non-Hispanic (89.7%, $n = 217$), Hispanic/Latino/a (1.7%, $n = 4$), Multiracial (2.1%, $n = 5$), Native American (0.4%, $n = 1$), or Not Identified (0.4%, $n = 1$).

**Results**

The results from Study 3 indicated a successful replication of previous results using a nonstudent, adult sample. The replication of Study 3 used a Principal Components Analysis with oblimin rotation, again revealing one factor, which accounted for 67.6% of the variance in the data. The items loaded on this factor were all .56 or above. In this sample, the ATSM scale yielded a reliability alpha of .97 ($N = 242$). There was a positive correlation between ATSM and educational attainment ($r = .22, p < .001$).
STUDY 4

Purpose

Results from Studies 1 to 3 revealed the ATSM to be a stable and reliable measure. Additionally, ATSM scores were positively correlated with educational attainment. Study 4 used a combined student and non-student population sample (from Study 2 and Study 3, respectively) permitting an additional investigation of the ATSM’s factor structure. Independent factor analyses were conducted for women and men, as well as a combined sample. Reliability analyses were also conducted for each sample.

Using this combined sample, construct validity of the ATSM was investigated. Correlations with the ATLG-S scale, religiosity, and political orientation were considered. Consistent with past research on scale development for the Modern Homonegativity Scale, a single-item scale was used to assess religious identification and political conservatism (Morrison & Morrison, 2002). Participants rated their religious self-schema and political orientation on a five-point scale, with higher scores denoting greater levels of religiosity and political conservatism, respectively.

Hypotheses

A negative correlation between ATSM and ATLG-S scores was predicted, as higher scores on the ATSM indicate more positive attitudes toward same-sex marriage and lower scores on the ATLG-S indicate more positive attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Past research has demonstrated that negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men are related to religiosity and political conservatism. It was predicted that attitudes toward same-sex marriage would follow a similar pattern. Negative correlations were predicted between ATSM and religiosity, as well as ATSM and political conservatism. Individuals who indicate being more religious and more politically conservative are expected to have lower ATSM scores. It is also predicted that there will be a positive correlation between educational attainment and positive scores on the ATSM.

Participants

The study used a combined sample from Study 2 and Study 3 and included a total of 587 participants. The analysis did not include surveys
completed by participants who identified themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning \((n = 120)\). Therefore, the data analysis included surveys from 467 heterosexual participants (359 women and 108 men). The sample was regionally diverse as participants resided in 35 U.S. states and Washington, DC. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 87 years, with a mean age of 28.66 years \((SD = 12.13)\). Participants identified themselves as African American/Black \((6.0\%, n = 28)\), Asian American \((2.1\%, n = 10)\), White/Non-Hispanic \((86.1\%, n = 402)\), Hispanic/Latino/a \((2.4\%, n = 11)\), Multiracial \((2.8\%, n = 13)\), Native American \((0.2\%, n = 1)\), or Not Identified \((.4\%, n = 2)\).

**Results**

*Psychometric properties of the ATSM scale.* Three Principal Components Analyses were conducted, revealing similar results for women, men, and a combined sample (see Table 1). For each analysis, the 17 items loaded on one factor and accounted for 61.98% \((eigenvalue = 10.54)\), 66.39% \((eigenvalue = 11.29)\) and 64.30% \((eigenvalue = 10.93)\) of the total variance, respectively. Across these samples, the ATSM scale yielded high levels of internal consistency where \(\alpha = .96\) \((n = 359)\) for women, .97 \((n = 108)\) for men and .96 \((N = 467)\) for the combined sample.

*Sex differences in ATSM and ATLG-S scores.* Independent sample t-tests were conducted to determine whether heterosexual women and men differed in their attitudes toward same-sex marriage (ATSM) or on their attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (ATLG-S). Results are presented in Table 2. As predicted, results indicated that men \((M = 55.96, SD = 20.38)\) had significantly more negative attitudes toward same-sex marriage than women \((M = 66.57, SD = 17.40)\), \(t (465) = 4.90, p < .001\). As expected, men also had significantly more negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men \((M = 22.87, SD = 11.04)\) than women \((M = 18.86, SD = 9.48)\), \(t (465) = 3.41, p < .001\).

*Construct validity.* Table 3 illustrates the correlations of the ATLG-S and other participant demographics with ATSM scores. As hypothesized, ATSM scores correlated negatively with ATLG-S scores, \(r = -.87, p < .001\). Participants indicating more positive attitudes on the ATSM (higher scores) also reported more positive attitudes on the ATLG-S (lower scores). Other correlations also followed the predicted pattern. There was a negative correlation between ATSM and self-described religiosity \((r = -.38, p < .001\) for women, and \(r = -.30, p < .001\) for men) and ATSM and political conservatism \((r = -.64, p < .001\) for women, and \(r = -.60, p < .001\) for men). Finally, using a partial correlation,
TABLE 1. Factor Loadings of the Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Women (n = 359)</th>
<th>Men (n = 108)</th>
<th>Total (N = 467)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.786</td>
<td>.786</td>
<td>.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.728</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td>.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>.837</td>
<td>.830</td>
<td>.844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>.694</td>
<td>.843</td>
<td>.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>.717</td>
<td>.640</td>
<td>.706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>.847</td>
<td>.867</td>
<td>.859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>.909</td>
<td>.936</td>
<td>.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>.852</td>
<td>.888</td>
<td>.869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>.920</td>
<td>.882</td>
</tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td>.860</td>
<td>.848</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>.823</td>
<td>.860</td>
<td>.842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>.792</td>
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<td>.696</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>.723</td>
<td>.770</td>
<td>.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>.574</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>.600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>.844</td>
<td>.843</td>
<td>.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>.879</td>
<td>.918</td>
<td>.894</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Variance accounted for was 61.98% and 66.39%, for women and men, respectively, and 64.30% for the total sample.

TABLE 2. Mean Scores and t-Tests for Effect of Sex on ATSM and ATLG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Women (n = 359)</th>
<th>Men (n = 108)</th>
<th>t-Test (N = 467)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATSM</td>
<td>66.57</td>
<td>55.96</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATLG</td>
<td>18.86</td>
<td>22.87</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: High scores on the ATSM represent more positive attitudes, whereas high scores on the ATLG represent more negative attitudes. All correlations are significant at the .01 level.

TABLE 3. Correlations Between ATSM and ATLG, Religiosity, and Political Conservatism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women (n = 359)</th>
<th>Men (n = 108)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATLG</td>
<td>-.862</td>
<td>-.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>-.375</td>
<td>-.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political conservatism</td>
<td>-.636</td>
<td>-.601</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All correlations are significant at the .01 level.
controlling for participant age, there was a positive correlation between educational attainment and scores on the ATSM ($r = .206, p < .000$ for women, and $r = .124, p < .000$ for men).

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

*Development of the ATSM Scale*

The results of these studies support the contention that the ATSM is a psychometrically robust measure of attitudes toward same-sex marriage. The factor structure and reliability of the scale were consistent across all samples. The construct validity of the ATSM was demonstrated as scores were highly correlated with scores on the *Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale* (Herek, 1988) and followed predicted correlational patterns with select demographics, including educational attainment, religiosity, and political conservatism. As hypothesized, women reported more positive attitudes toward same-sex marriage than men, and more positive attitudes were related to a higher level of educational attainment. Religiosity and political conservatism were negatively correlated with attitudes toward same-sex marriage.

*Limitations of Present Study and Directions for Future Research*

The development of the ATSM represents an important contribution to the study of attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Establishing the psychometric properties of the scale permits the reliable measurement of attitudes specific to same-sex marriage. To date, the ATSM is the first published scale designed to assess attitudes toward same-sex marriage and provides a contrast to public opinion research that often utilizes single-item measures. The 17-item ATSM scale may provide a more sensitive measure for experimental researchers as the potential range of scores extends between 17 and 85 (68 point spread) on an interval scale. Across the studies reported here, actual participant scores fell within the entire range where the minimum score was 17 and the maximum was 85 ($M = 64.11, SD = 18.65$). An important direction for research may be the development of a shortened version of the ATSM that
may provide a compromise between a single-item measure and the 17-item ATSM that may prove too lengthy for some research purposes.

The construct validity of the scale was addressed by documenting the relation between ATSM and Herek’s (1988) scale assessing attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. As newer scales have been developed to assess more “modern” notions of homonegativity (Morrison & Morrison, 2002), the relation between the ATSM and modern views of homosexuality should also be assessed.

This research supported the predicted relation between ATSM scores and certain demographic factors, including sex, educational attainment, religiosity, and political orientation. Future research should also address the relation of age, racial identity, and frequency of contact with lesbians and gay men to ATSM scores. As with any measure of attitudes on controversial issues, future research should also investigate whether issues of social desirability factor into participants’ responses on the ATSM.

Although this study provides preliminary research describing the association between religiosity and attitudes toward same-sex marriage, it does so with a single-item measure that assesses participants’ religious self-schema. The role of religion in attitude formation on this issue is likely more complex and multifaceted. To fully understand the relationship between religion and attitudes toward same-sex marriage, future research should investigate other measures related to religious belief, practice, and affiliation. In addition, while religious groups against same-sex marriage have received much attention (e.g., Herman, 1997), supportive religious groups played a major role in shaping popular and legislative opinion in the controversy over civil unions between 1996 and 2001 (Barclay & Marshall, 2002). The role of religion as it relates to both positive and negative attitudes toward same-sex marriage warrants additional consideration.

Finally, the recent U.S. debate over the issue of same-sex marriage has caused many states to consider constitutional amendments that effectively preclude same-sex couples from being legally married. In some instances, state residents are given the opportunity to vote on these amendments. Future research should, therefore, focus on how individual attitudes toward same-sex marriage factor into voting behavior.

Given the relevance of the topic to current political and social events, the investigation of attitudes toward same-sex marriage presents an important direction for future research. The development of the Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale represents a promising contribution to this field of research.
REFERENCES


doi:10.1300/J082v53n03_07
Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale (ATSM)

1. Same-sex marriage undermines the meaning of the traditional family.*
2. Two loving same-sex parents can provide the same quality of parenting and guidance as a man and a woman.
3. A primary purpose of marriage is to provide stability in a loving relationship. Same-sex partners should have this legal right available to them.
4. The recognition of same-sex marriage poses a threat to society because public schools will be forced to teach that homosexuality is normal.*
5. Marital protections, such as social security and health care benefits, should be available to same-sex partners.
6. Same-sex marriage will strengthen the morals of society by supporting equality.
7. I support individuals who are not heterosexual seeking marriage rights.
8. Because more people will have the benefits of marriage, family will be strengthened by the recognition of same-sex marriages.
9. Men and women naturally complement one another, therefore a union between two men or two women should not be recognized in marriage.*
10. The legalization of same-sex marriage is an important step toward the acceptance of individuals who are not heterosexual.
11. A primary purpose of marriage is to raise children, therefore only a man and a woman should be married.*
12. Same-sex marriage ensures equal rights for all relationships regardless of sexual orientation.
13. The legalization of same-sex marriage will lead to unnecessary financial burdens, such as social security and health care benefits.*
14. The legalization of same-sex marriage will jeopardize religious freedom.*
15. Individuals should be free to enter into marriage with another same-sex consenting adult because God created all people and does not make mistakes.
16. Same-sex marriage will lead to the moral decay of society.*
17. I oppose the legalization of same-sex marriage.*

Note: Items with an asterisk require reverse scoring. Response key: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree somewhat; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree somewhat; 5 = Strongly agree.